



NEWS RELEASE

British and Dutch Overseas Caribbean Territories to Benefit from EC Funding for HIV

CURACAO: June 26, 2009 - Netherlands Antilles Health and Social Development Minister, the Hon. Mrs. Omayra Leeftang, today delivered the keynote address at the launch of a five-year, US\$8million European Community (EC) project designed to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS in the British and Dutch Caribbean Overseas Caribbean Territories (OCTs). Minister Leeftang, in describing the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on regional social and economic development, commended the EC, PAHO and the other participating organizations for what she termed “an important regional program”.

The project entitled **Strengthening the Integration of the British and Dutch Overseas Caribbean Territories in the Regional Response to HIV/AIDS through the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP)** is intended to minimize the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health, social and economic sectors of participating countries. It is being implemented by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Among the specific achievements of the project will be enhanced prevention efforts to reduce the spread of the disease, greater access to care and support for HIV/AIDS victims, strengthened human rights for Persons Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs), marked improvements in the capacity of participating countries to implement comprehensive HIV/AIDS programs and better coordination among the countries and the wider Caribbean.

The inaugural meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which was chaired by Mr. Ralph James, who represented the Regional Authorizing Office of the Project, was held immediately after the launch. The PSC, which will provide overall policy direction to the project, comprises representatives of the participating Overseas Territories as well as international and community organizations including PLWHAs. Other participants at the meeting are national project focal points together with regional stakeholders (PANCAP, OECS) and international partners including the EC, UNAIDS, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and PAHO.

The countries involved in the project are Anguilla, Aruba, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Montserrat, Saba, St Eustatius, St Maarten, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Other speakers at the launch included Ms. Monica McLean of the European Commission, Mr. Neil Smith, Deputy Regional Authorizing Officer (DRTAO) of the Caribbean, Dr. Gina Watson, PAHO representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and Dr. Amalia Del Riego of the PAHO HIV Caribbean Office (PHCO).

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